



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE HOLLY CHEESEMAN
THIRTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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RANKING MEMBER
FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE

MEMBER
GENERAL LAW COMMITTEE
ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

March 8, 2022 * 11:30am * Zoom

Testimony *in support of* Raised HB 5300 AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND PROHIBITING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES.

Dear Chairmen Slap and Elliott, Ranking Members Witkos and Haines, and distinguished members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

I appreciate having the opportunity to submit testimony *in support of* Raised H.B. No. 5300 AN ACT REQUIRING LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR THE MERGER OR CLOSING OF INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE CONNECTICUT STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND PROHIBITING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY-TECHNICAL COLLEGES.

The decision to merge our community colleges into one body is a significant step and one not to be undertaken lightly. It is telling that the first attempt to achieve this consolidation was rejected out of hand by NECHE several years ago. This move had never before been tried and NECHE rightly had misgivings. Despite that, the initiative has continued to this day.

No one will argue that our community colleges face daunting challenges, with declining enrollment and increased costs, coupled with the enormous problems posed by the pandemic. Likewise, no one can dispute that these colleges must adapt and evolve to deal successfully with the changing nature of education and to serve in a better way the needs of their student body. Yet these cost savings and adaptations should not come at the cost of the student experience, jeopardize the unique attributes of each college, nor serve merely to create a whole new layer of bureaucracy.

It is troubling that this has taken place wholly without the input of the legislature. I believe there are still significant questions that need to be answered and therefore I urge that the legislature be required to approve any change of this magnitude that will have such an affect on the community college system.

I appreciate you taking my comments into consideration on Raised HB 5300 and I urge Committee members to support this bill. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Holly Ma", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Holly Cheeseman
State Representative, 37th District
East Lyme, Niantic, Salem